

Amateurs contribute to the public good. In many areas they provide an emergency communications backbone capability at no taxpayer cost. Consistently we have witnessed storms and natural disasters completely wipe out internet, cellular, and other means of communication. Radio amateurs often fill that void on an unmatched, flexible basis when needed. One recent example is the California wildfires.

Unlike operators in other FCC licensed services, Amateur Radio operators by law – domestic and international -- must eschew using their license for any pecuniary interest. Amateurs are prohibited from earning or charging any money for any communications activity. The expenses for their equipment and activities come out of their own pockets, with no opportunity for reimbursement or payment of any kind.

The United States is experiencing a severe lack of RF engineers and expertise at the very time it is needed by the burgeoning wireless industries. Amateur radio is helping to meet the deficit, but much more is needed and youngsters (High School and College-aged) are least able to afford licensing fees. RF knowledge and related digital expertise is needed to maintain U.S. leadership in wireless industries. At a minimum, young people (below the age of 26) should be exempt from the proposed license fees.

Amateur radio is self-regulating. (a) Amateur examinations are written and administered by radio amateur volunteers. (b) Examination results and paperwork most often are submitted electronically to the FCC. Electronic submission could be required if there would be a cost savings to the Commission. (c) Amateur radio educational classes are conducted by volunteers who by-and-large do not charge fees or tuition for teaching. (d) The amateur service, in cooperation with the FCC's Enforcement Bureau, has a volunteer corps that monitors the amateur airwaves, and has programs that try to prevent their misuse before FCC involvement might be needed. The amateurs also observe non-amateur signals both within amateur spectrum and outside it, and report unusual or suspicious signals.

Amateur radio continues to be a source of significant technological innovation that should be encouraged, not discouraged."